



Governing For Racial Equity Conference

**December 13 & 14, 2012
Seattle, WA**

CONFERENCE REPORT



**RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE
INITIATIVE**

**ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY.
ACHIEVE EQUITY.**

SUMMARY

Event: Governing for Racial Equity Conference

Location: Seattle University

Dates: December 13-14, 2012

OVERVIEW

The Governing for Racial Equity Conference was a success with 450 people participating on Thursday, December 13 and 410 on Friday, Dec 14. Van Jones and Connie Rice provided Conference keynotes and Professor John Powell of Berkeley Law School's Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society moderated two plenary panels, one on communicating about race and one with elected officials. The Conference offered forty-one workshops and seven strategy sessions over two days. Workshops were grouped in the following tracks: Structural Racism, Partnerships, Collective Impact; Public Policy That Supports Racial Equity; Communicating about Race; Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tools; Building Capacity; and Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement.



Conference Planning Team

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SPONSORS

The conference was hosted by the Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative. The following organizations were sponsors: Seattle University, Puget Sound Educational Service District, Race and Pedagogy Initiative, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity, Seattle Housing Authority, King County, Social Justice Fund and International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies. City of Seattle sponsors included Seattle Public Utilities, Department of Planning and Development, Personnel, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle City Light and the City Auditor.



CONFERENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

Participant and presenter demographic data were collected during registration. We received information from 88% of attendees and 59% of presenters.

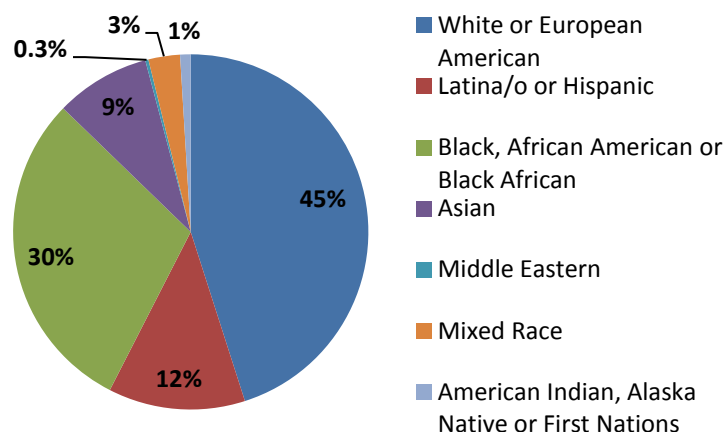
Total registrants: 450

Participant demographics

Gender: 74% female/ 27% male
(2% no response)

Age range: 22-67 **Average age:** 44

Participants by Race/Ethnicity

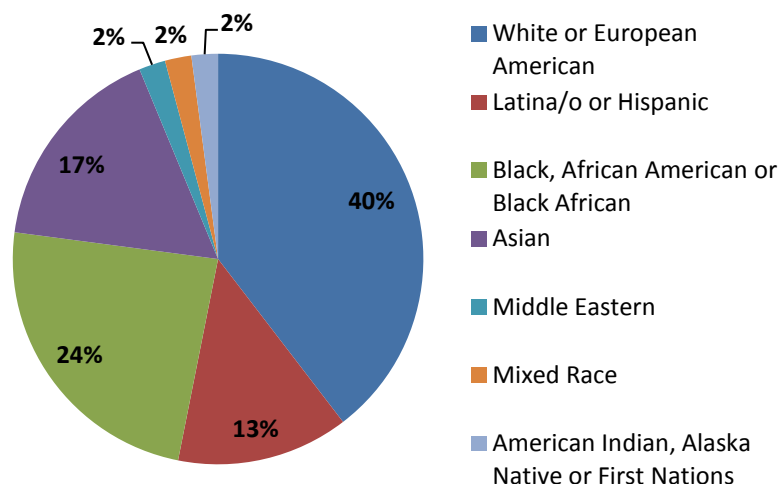


Presenter demographics

Gender: 54% female/ 41% male/
2% transgender or gender variant (3% no response)

Age range: 26-67 **Average age:** 45

Presenters by Race/Ethnicity



PARTICIPATING ELECTED OFFICIALS

Suquamish Tribe

Chairman Leonard Forsman

Tulalip Tribe

Chairwoman Deborah Parker

City of Seattle

Mayor Mike McGinn

Councilmember Mike O'Brien

Councilmember Sally Clark

Councilmember Nick Licata

Councilmember Bruce Harrell

City Attorney Pete Holmes

Washington State Supreme Court

The Honorable Steven Gonzales

The Honorable Charles Z. Smith

City of Bellevue

Councilmember Claudia Balducci

City of Kent

Councilmember Elizabeth Albertson

Councilmember Dennis Higgins

Councilmember Deborah Ranniger

City of Renton

Councilmember Gregory Taylor

King County

County Councilmember Larry Gossett

Minnesota

Toni Carter, Ramsey County

Board of Commissioners

PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTAL JURISDICTIONS

California

City/County of San Francisco

Colorado

City/County of Denver

Maine

City of Portland

Michigan

Minneapolis

City of Minneapolis

City of St. Paul

Nebraska

City of Omaha

Oregon

City of Eugene

City of Portland

Multnomah County

Alameda County

Clackamas County

Washington State

City of Bellevue

City of Kent

City of Mercer Island

City of Renton

City of Seattle

City of Tacoma

King County

Tulalip Tribe

Suquamish Tribe

Federal Agencies

Equal Employment and Opportunity

Commission (Seattle Field Office)

Housing & Urban Development (Regional)

National Parks Service

Canada

Province of British Columbia

MEETING OUR CONFERENCE GOAL

The Governing for Racial Equity Conference was an educational and networking opportunity geared for government employees to deepen skills in promoting inclusion, diversity and racial justice. Our goal for the conference was **to build a regional network of government, community, education and philanthropic partners working on racial equity**. We recognize that to build this network will require resources, time and commitment from institutions. Based on feedback from participants (27%), presenters, committee planners and volunteers, the conference laid the groundwork for effectively meeting this goal by creating solid opportunities for:

- **networking,**
- **skill-development;**
- **tool sharing.**

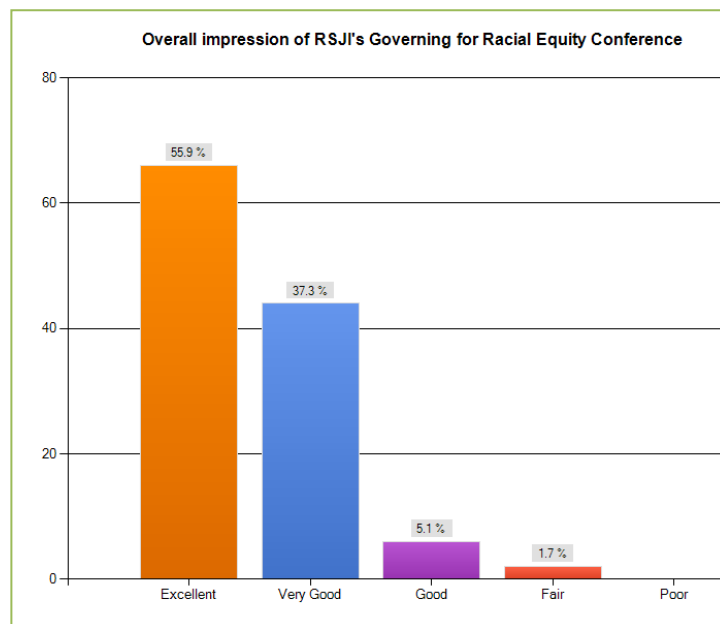
"The contact, speakers, participants were inspiring and knowledgeable- what a gift."

In addition, conference participants began conversations that:

- **Outlined priorities and effective strategies for ending racial inequity** in education, equitable development, criminal justice, health, jobs, housing and the environment.

In 2013, the burgeoning GRE Network will begin to develop these priorities into short and long term action plans.

Ninety-three percent (93%) rated the conference excellent or very good, with over half giving the conference the highest rating.



Keynote presenters were rated extremely high. A large number of participants shared that Van Jones, Connie Rice and John Powell were the highlights of their conference experience by giving them the opportunity to gain inspiration, learn and re-energize their commitment to racial equity work.

"Engaging, funny, inspiring... got the day started right."

Van Jones kicked off the conference and spoke on the need to govern for racial equity. Ninety-five percent (95%) rated Van Jones' keynote as very good to excellent. Numerous people stated he was the highlight of the conference.



Connie Rice spoke Friday afternoon on working to transform the criminal justice system. Seventy-five percent (75%) rated Connie's keynote very good to excellent. There were also a number of people who enjoyed hearing her personal story but would have liked to have her apply or draw out the lessons for attendees to apply to their work. The range of responses varied: some found her inspiring while others felt she missed an opportunity to provide a key message or lacked focus.

"Connie Rice is a pistol. Great storyteller."



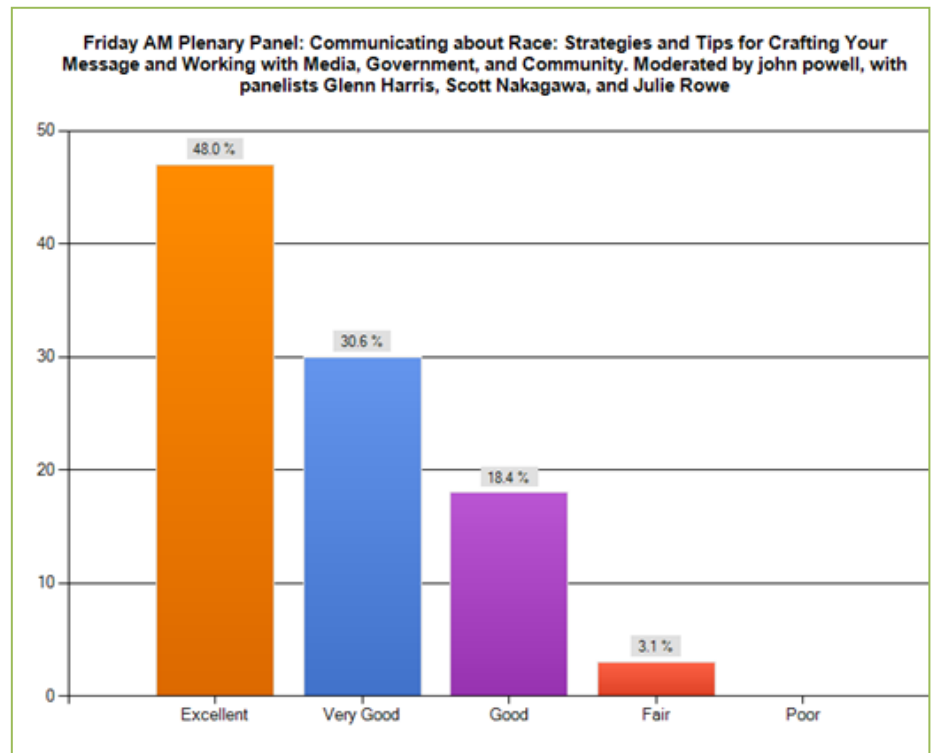
The conference featured two **plenary panels**. The Friday morning plenary panel, *Communicating about Race: Strategies and Tips for Crafting Your Message and Working with Media, Government and Community* was moderated by john powell, with panelists Glenn Harris, Scott Nakagawa, and Julie Rowe. Attendees rated the panel high with 79% rating it very good to excellent.

"Good messages about narrative, naming, framing."

Many people said they would have liked to hear more from john powell either as a keynote or in a workshop.

All presenters received strong reviews, but many noted Scot Nakagawa's research and presentation on Asian Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders.

The greatest critiques of this session were the need for more time, more of a conversation versus a presentation format and stronger focus.



john powell moderated the Friday afternoon plenary panel of elected officials, with panelists Bellevue Councilmember Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn and Renton Councilmember Greg Taylor. Forty percent (40%) rated it good and 47% rated it very good to excellent. Many who said it was a good session saying they received interesting or informative information.

"Not enough time for all the presenters."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS INSTITUTIONS AND ACROSS THE REGION

The conference was a chance for staff from government agencies across the Pacific Northwest to connect across institutions and with partners in philanthropy, higher education and the community. The majority of attendees were from government agencies, with staff from higher education and community organizations the next highest. We had minimal participation from philanthropy which will be an area to work on for the next conference. Attendees represented institutions from municipal, regional, state and federal agencies. While our reach was initially intended for the Pacific Northwest region, we also attracted participants from California, Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, Virginia, Illinois, Washington D.C., Maryland, Maine, Nebraska, New York and British Columbia.

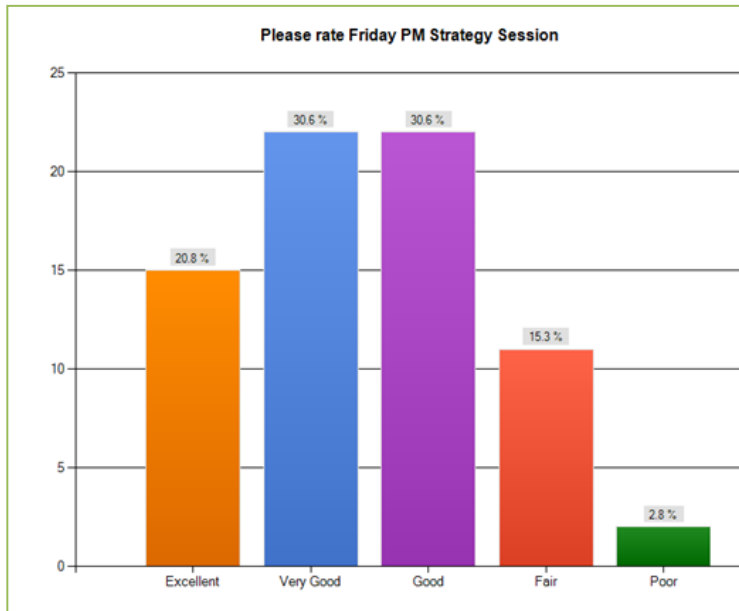
"A collective commitment existed throughout the conference to speak from a common framework around race & social equity: from politicians to practitioners."

When asked to share their overall impressions and favorite things about the conference the majority of participants said they most valued making connections and networking.

There were two sessions specifically devoted to creating the Governing for Racial Equity Network. The first was a workshop; the second were Strategy Sessions on Education, Equitable Development, Criminal Justice, Health, Jobs, Housing, and the Environment.



The Strategy Sessions were a chance for participants to discuss priorities for the work of the Governing for Racial Equity Network. These sessions drew the most varied responses in terms of usefulness. There was a consistent theme that there was not enough time for a session nearly everyone felt was critical to have.



"Not enough time."

The lack of structure and differing levels of expertise in issue areas also led to frustrations for some participants. Some felt that the sessions were not as valuable as they could have been. Others remarked that talking about challenges and opportunities was an excellent way to hold the conversation.

"We identified common challenges and hope to continue to stay connected to use each



TOOLS AND SKILL BUILDING FOR RACIAL EQUITY

A second major highlight for participants was that workshops, keynotes and plenary sessions provided concrete tools that people could put into practice in their own agency, or use as a model to replicate and apply to their work.



Workshops across the board were rated very good to excellent by nearly 40% of attendees. Participants appreciated presenters' explaining strategies, presenters with strong knowledge in issue areas, clear deliverables, interactive sessions, sessions with a mix of lecture, exercise and discussion and sessions with opportunity for Q&A.

Participants rated some workshops lower that were less interactive, that didn't allow enough time for Q&A or that weren't moderated strongly enough to prevent one or two people from dominating the conversation.

"Favorite thing -- the sharing of information, the collaboration. We are breaking new ground and it is extremely helpful to share our successes and our shortfalls."

While all the presentations received positive feedback, some participants felt that the conference would have benefited from a more regional representation of workshop presenters. Many people commented on the fact that workshops felt rushed due to being overtime, while some said that the longer session felt too long. Others appreciated the mix of long and short sessions. Two-part sessions might allow more practical application practice on a given topic.

Facilities and planning details

The conference was held at Seattle University in the Pigott Building, with keynotes held in Pigott Auditorium (capacity 410) and lunch in Campion Ballroom (capacity 405). Workshops were held in classrooms in Piggot (14 rooms available at a time). Participants commented that the location was excellent and highly praised Seattle University staff for their wonderful customer service. Our conference event service staff was extremely professional and on-hand throughout the event whenever questions arose.

Despite the wonderful services provided, there were a few venue-related drawbacks highlighted by participants that we can improve upon in future conferences:

"How well organized the whole conference was. I was able to get a lot out of the conference because it flowed smoothly and was a lot of fun."

- The **distances** between Pigott and both the parking lot and and Campion Ballroom were difficult for people with mobility limitations. Many participants cited the problem this distance caused. Locating lunch in the same building or in closer proximity would solve this issue.
- **Gender neutral bathrooms** were not provided in Piggott. A volunteer who knew the campus showed an attendee where one was available in the Law School but staff had not been aware of it. For future conferences, the Planning Committee must ensure that gender neutral bathrooms are designated and located in the main venue.

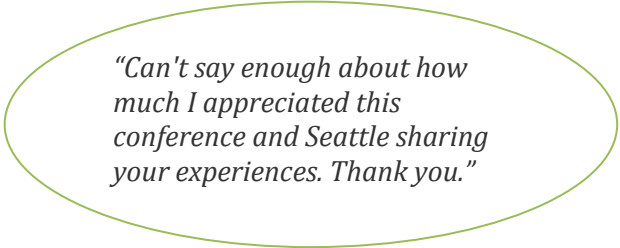


Other planning logistics that could be improved include:

- **Making gluten-free options** available during the morning snack.
- **Providing easier to read signs** directing foot traffic between Pigott and Campion Ballroom and to the classrooms.
- **Increasing the size of the font used for participant name badges** to make it easier to network.
- **Developing a system to accept credit cards** for registration, invoicing and book sales.

Conclusion

The Governing for Racial Equity Conference achieved the goals we set out to meet. It was a success in terms of providing skills for those working on racial equity in government, philanthropy, the community and higher education. The conference also allowed people to build relationships and connect with one other, as well as build a foundation for developing a formal regional network of government and partners working for racial equity. Lastly and significantly, it recharged and recommitted participants to stay engaged in working for racial equity. This work is long-term and system-changing. This conference provided a much-needed venue to come together, share resources and energize ourselves to continue our work to ensure government is changing the lives of all our communities for the better.



"Can't say enough about how much I appreciated this conference and Seattle sharing your experiences. Thank you."